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The Power of Place: Colonization of the Anglo-Saxon Landscape by Royal and Religious Ideologies

Samantha Leggett
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INTRODUCTION

Anglo-Saxon England in the first centuries after conversion to Christianity provides an interesting case study for integrated landscape approaches, among which placename evidence certainly plays a part. During the processes of conversion and Christianization the kingdoms saw many shifts to their social and physical landscapes. This change in religion and thus changes in worship rites and practices meant changes in perceptions and use of space within the landscape. The advent of Christianity for the Anglo-Saxons meant that new buildings and enclosures were introduced throughout Britain: churches, minsters, and monastic centres. These were new permanent elite fixtures where there had usually been only seasonal or mobile notions of an elite presence. Building in stone became more important and more common (Blair, 1988; Arnold, 1997; Blair, 2005). A sense of place and physicality was the Church's strongpoint, and it quickly dominated and colonized the landscape with churches, monasteries, minsters, and cathedrals. It dared to build where no royal had before, and often did so more prolifically. Choice of position and size of structures was key, and was heavily influenced by politics and economics (Blair, 1988; Cubitt, 1995; Arnold, 1997; Carver, 2003; Blair, 2005).

What started as an oppositional religio-colonial force (the Church, colonial in its ideology) quickly and periodically became incorporated into the dynastic structures of the Anglo-Saxon royal houses, with the highest-ranking churchmen (and women) often belonging to those same royal houses (Ridyard, 1988; Higham, 1997; Yorke, 2003; Leggett, forthcoming). It is primarily from church and royal documents that we gain information on the names of important settlements and ecclesiastical sites, as well as their worth, boundaries, and ownership (Cameron, 1975; Robertson, 1986; Cubitt, 1995; Barrow and Wareham, 2008; Higham and Ryan, 2011). The intimate connection and mutual reliance, a kind of symbiosis, between the Anglo-Saxon Church and the secular elite is clearly reflected in the documentary evidence. It is the aim of this paper to highlight, at least in a small way, this connection and its impact upon the wider landscape and archaeological record.

Placenames can tell us much about the ideological and other major influences in an area. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways: minster placenames, places named after an influential individual (king, bishop, saint, etc.), names reflecting the past or current inhabitants (Britons, Romans, Scandinavians, etc.), as well as reflecting the placement in the natural landscape or purpose of the site. For example, a name might reflect the river that the settlement is placed near or its purpose as a trading site. The choice of any of the above elements, (including those not mentioned here) can suggest the endurance of an idea encapsulated in the placename with those who recorded the place. This ensured through popular usage that an element of meaning and ideology in the landscape persisted. When we look at the landscape more broadly, incorporating proximal settlements and structures into a larger whole, we can trace the interactions between different social spheres, including the possible dominance of one over another. In our case, this interaction is predominantly the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon royalty and nobility, and the Anglo-Saxon clergy (Cameron, 1975; Gelling, 1984; Blair, 1988; Gelling, 1988; Cubitt, 1995; Brink, 1996; Foster, 2008; Higham and Ryan, 2011; Nordeide and Brink, 2013; Semple, 2013).

What is at the core of this preliminary research is the concept of plurality, both social and spatial. I propose that the strong plurality of power in early medieval England projects itself onto the settlement and landscape archaeology through settlement plurality. Placename evidence, as suggested above, can reflect this plurality, though not in every case (as we shall see below). This is due to the complex nature of placename studies, not to mention the loss of sources over time. What we have is often fossilized in modern placenames or pieced together from sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the Domesday Book, and charter evidence; but here we run into a myriad of other textual issues such as retrodiction and dating.

This paper examines key areas where royal and religious power over place interacted during the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England, namely coastal Northumbria, Winchester, London, and Oxford. This evidence, based on preliminary research, highlights the changing nature of Anglo-Saxon settlements and the occupation of the countryside (particularly in Northumbria) after the introduction of Christianity. These developments appear to complement the changes that occurred in the funerary sphere during this same period (c. 500-1100 A.D.). Religion brought ideological change, although royal families retained key social power, at least initially (Blair, 2005; Foster, 2008; Petts, 2009; Leggett, forthcoming). There is an interesting dynamic in which the Church chose to reoccupy and dominate previous Roman areas (e.g., in London and York) which the Saxons tended to occupy only peripherally. However, once the Church established itself in these areas, the royals then sought to build there as well (Meaney and Hawkes, 1970; Arnold, 1997; Bell, 2001). Both institutions sought to hold and influence key trade areas for economic and communication benefits, and thus came into direct competition (Loyn, 1984; Hodges, 1989; Arnold, 1997; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Campbell, 2004; Pestell, 2011). By focusing on these four cities/regions, the idea of place as the key to controlling the evolving Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during their Christianization will be explored.

Toponymic studies of Anglo-Saxon England tend to focus more on Roman and Viking origins than any other cultural influence (Cameron, 1975; Hines, 1984; Gelling, 1988; Daniell, 2008). This therefore limits the insights available for scholars looking to other cultures neighboring the Anglo-Saxons for clues about landscape use and development. However, most of the Old English names examined in the case studies presented here do indeed incorporate aspects of both Roman and Viking influence. It is interesting to note the relative importance of these sites both historically and archaeologically compared with their Old English names. Much of the interpretative framework for the placename and landscape aspects used in this paper owe a debt to the works of Margaret Gelling (1979, 1984, 1988), Stefan Brink (1996), John Blair (1988, 2005), Chris Loveluck (2006), and David Petts (2009), the latter three of whom helped me with my work a great deal. Gelling's work on placename evidence has been instrumental in linking the Old English names for these settlements with their topographical and archaeological contexts (Gelling, 1979, 1984, 1988). Brink's concepts around placenames and the toponomasticon are central to this analysis, forming the backbone for this interdisciplinary and integrative approach (Brink, 1996; Nordeide and Brink, 2013). Blair, Loveluck, and Petts all provide interesting theoretical perspectives on Middle Saxon settlements, their function, and integration in the wider landscape and ideological sphere of Anglo-Saxon elites (Blair, 1988, 2005; Loveluck and Tys, 2006; Petts, 2009). Blair's focus is primarily on the relationships between ecclesiastical structures and other Anglo-Saxon built elements, as well as the landscape (Blair, 1988; Blair, 1990; Blair, 2005). Loveluck's work on the wics and trading centres of the North Sea champions the role of trade and the mercantile class in settlement development and economy, valuing their influence on cultural change just as much as that of elites (whether they be ecclesiastical or lay) (Loveluck and Tys, 2006). The Archaeology Department at Durham University advocates for the unique situation in Northumbria, particularly the coastal areas, and the ecclesiastical versus lay settlement development in the region (Petts, 2009; Semple, 2013). What this

paper sets out to achieve is a synthesis of these approaches and the available data to show the highly dynamic social aspects of the Middle Saxon period in England and the impact of these ideologies on settlements in the landscape.

To understand how placenames are going to be viewed here, we need to introduce Stefan Brink's concept of the toponomasticon and toponomastics as a subset of onomastics. For Brink (1996) any name, be it for a person, object, or place is part of an individual and cultural onomastic competence. Naming, particularly for places, draws on a pool of possible elements and associations which relate to landscape features and the built environment, among other things. He states that, over time, this process becomes less about name giving and more about choosing among suitable names (that is, less invention and individual choice); and this phenomenon can account for some level of internal consistency within a language or region. The naming of places and the pool of possible names that a person or people can draw from is therefore the toponomasticon; and an individual or group's competence can be defined in several ways, which in turn affect the types and regularity of placenames used. Brink's typology of toponomastics is as follows: name transfer, eponymization/renaming and name giving anew from a personal or communal toponomasticon, usually through pattern or analogy (Brink, 1996). While it is hard to know in the examples below the exact category within which the placenames fall, we can assume in most cases, according to Margaret Gelling (1979, 1984, 1988), that it is the latter that we are dealing with. Differentiating between these types of place naming is sometimes close to impossible, but nonetheless important to consider in an archaeological context, particularly when considering the Danish occupation of parts of England. Plenty of research has been done on Scandinavian placenames in Britain, especially within the Danelaw and Scotland. This work will endeavor not to repeat this prior scholarship, except to say that the corpus of toponyms of this type and their toponomasticon is robust. There are some key questions which arise from this approach in relation to the case studies below: can we tell if eponymization or name transfer has occurred from the Saxon homelands (or even Scandinavia) to England? Does this tell us anything about the ideological negotiations going on during Christianization? The answer to these questions is most likely "no," as we will see below.

Now that the basics of toponomastics and the generation of placenames have been outlined, a brief look at how they were used in the Anglo-Saxon context will be presented. Gelling's (1988) attempt to create a chronology for English placenames is an interesting one. Even she admits that it is difficult and often misleading to use placename evidence for landscape studies. However, due to the variety of sources for Old English placenames (both in type and date) Gelling is confident that placenames or elements of them can be used as far back as the fifth and sixth centuries in some cases, due to a fantastic consistency in transmission and form (Gelling, 1988). We have to be wary of the oral transmission of placenames, however, and Gelling (1988) believes it is possible to back-mutate from Middle English placenames found in the Domesday Book or even later texts, given the substantial number of placenames which are attested in both Old and Middle English sources that are available for comparison. The author here will make no such back mutations as, luckily, the case studies here need little interpretation. It is perhaps important, however, to note that such a process is possible for more difficult settlement placenames.

Three major characteristics are used to categorize placenames, and to understand them as indicators of past landscapes or cultural markers: abundance, ubiquity, and internal consistency. The last category requires consistency in the association between topography and the words associated with it in placenames, for example, "...-on-hill", or consistency between the word used and the institution it refers to, for example, wic, cot, stow. Rarely are terms that form placenames synonyms in Old English (the words for farms and villages are a case in point). Similarly (at least in Old English), there is a general consistency with the treatment of loan words from other languages as well (Gelling, 1988). This, therefore, means that those people doing the naming had a very high

toponomastic competence (Gelling, 1988; Brink, 1996). This overall consistency through time from Old English to Middle English, alongside the consistency in transmission even from Celtic languages (at least in replication of sounds) means that some consistency of meaning has been transmitted (Gelling, 1988). This forms an important part of the work here. So, how well do the maps of power, naming, and archaeology align?

Gelling (1988) was unable to contrive a chronology for English placenames, and thus we are left without a guide on this front, although we can use the names for landscape interpretation due to their great consistency, as she frequently points out. There is no overall pattern between the dates in the archaeology and placenames, so therefore no time-depth element can be brought to the archaeology from the toponomastics. The accuracy of the evidence of long disappeared landscape or cultural elements, however, is taken as reliable here (Gelling, 1988; Brink, 1996). What is clear from Gelling (1988) and Brink's (1996) work, as well as the data presented here, is that there is a strong topographical correlation between placenames and certain aspects of the Anglo-Saxon anthropogenic sphere. If Brink's (1996) ideas of toponomastics are paired with Gelling's theories and studies of early medieval British placenames (1979, 1984, 1988), we find a high degree of competence not just within regions of Anglo-Saxon England on what might be an individual or folk level, but on a whole Old English language level. The high degree of consistency between dialects, kingdoms, geographical regions, etc. shows an overall high level of onomastic competency in the Anglo-Saxon world through time. It is by no means perfect, but the relative reliability of Old English and Anglo-Scandinavian placenames often aligns with the anthropogenic footprints found by archaeologists, as investigated in this paper.

The majority of case studies presented here, with the exception of the Northumbrian sites (bar York) are what I have termed "trifecta sites." This term encompasses the plural, yet nucleated and centralized nature of these Anglo-Saxon towns. What is interesting about these sites is that they are tripartite in nature: they have a major economic focus (be that a large trading area such as a wic or perhaps a mint), they have significant ecclesiastical presence with a major monastery, minster, or cathedral dating to the Middle Saxon period present, and also are a site associated with royalty (this is usually only in the form of documentary evidence as archaeological finds of Anglo-Saxon palaces or royal halls are extremely rare). At the point of publication, the author has identified twenty-two of these sites, four of which are presented below. An interesting point to note is that, as it currently stands, there are only two trifecta sites in Northumbria, with one (Durham) being distinctly within the Late Saxon period, essentially leaving York as the sole Northumbrian trifecta town for centuries. While this distinction between Northumbria and the kingdoms south of the Humber is not a new revelation for many scholars, the distinctive patterns of settlement and emerging centralization might be a surprise to some.

What we are essentially dealing with here is an archaeo-toponymic study which will highlight the spatially and (hopefully) the ideologically dominant players in each of the case study settlements. What we will show is that it is rarely a straightforward case of the church or the royalty and nobility possessing complete control over an area, but rather a complex interaction between these two interests, economic activity and the surrounding landscape.

COASTAL (AND RIVERINE) NORTHUMBRIA – BAMBURGH AND YORK

As discussed by Petts (2009), Northumbria appears to be a special case in Anglo-Saxon England across multiple categories such as dialects, Christianization, and governance. Northumbria operated in a recognizable but different way in its settlement patterns than the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. While there are certainly still major royal, ecclesiastical, and other settlement sites along river valleys, the key zones of focus for the elite appear to be coastal rather than riverine. While this

may not seem surprising in terms of trade, the nature of the major sites along this zone may prove otherwise, especially when considered with the other case studies below (Loveluck and Tys, 2006; Petts, 2009).

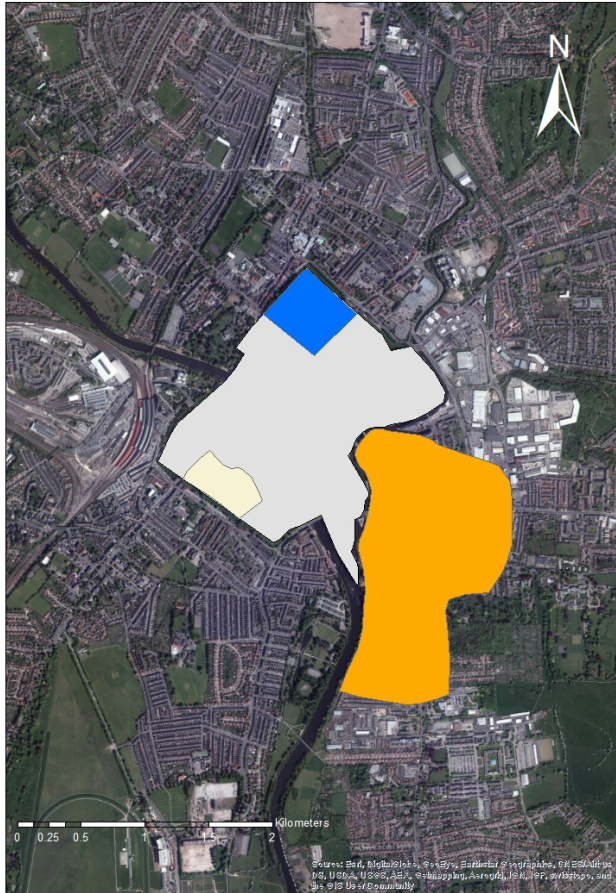


Figure 1 – York (Eoformic) and its major components as it would have been c. 800 A.D. Grey = walled city area, orange = vic settlement (exact boundaries unknown), blue = minster precinct in the old Roman fort area, light yellow = monastic precinct across the river in the old colonia.

The Northumbrian pattern of settlement and church colonization of the landscape epitomizes the settlement plurality introduced above. Very rarely do Northumbrian settlements enclose or expand to become one settlement in the early medieval period, but instead stay separate. The contradiction to this rule is York (and later Durham, although it has very distinct zones). In the seventh and eighth centuries, however, York is still very pluralistic with the *colonia* and *wic* sites separated from the main town by the rivers Fosse and Ouse, and it remains somewhat distinct until later centuries, when it came under Scandinavian rule (Drake, 1788; Wachter, 1974a; Hall, 1988; Arnold, 1997; Pestell, 2011). The placenames of the town evolved from the Roman's Latin name *Eboracum*, to the Old English interpretation *Eoformic*, and then to the Old Norse translation – *Jorvik* (where we get the modern name York). The key component here is the “wic” or “vik” ending, a common theme in many prosperous early medieval towns in Anglo-Saxon England and beyond. It clearly foregrounds the importance of the settlement as a trading centre more so than the Roman inheritance (Drake, 1788; Cameron, 1975; Gelling, 1988; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Pestell, 2011). These two aspects combined – the trading settlement and the Roman infrastructure – have meant that York is an anomaly among Northumbrian towns. It is important to note that York is different and more

southern in its spatial patterning, partially due to its Roman roots, as mentioned above, but also likely due to a number of other reasons. Firstly, it is not coastal but riverine, uniquely positioned on the confluence of the two rivers, which gives it special advantage as a settlement site, not least due to the flooding of the rivers making the hinterland good for farming. Secondly, it is relatively far south when considering the majority of other settlement evidence we have for this time period, making it geographically and archaeologically more similar to its southern counterparts than its fellow Northumbrians (Drake, 1788; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Loveluck and Tys, 2006; Petts, 2009). Durham has a purely ecclesiastical foundation to blame for its centralized layout due to the Prince-Bishops and unique peninsular geographical position. We will not discuss this in depth here as it is in the Late Saxon and early Norman periods where Durham truly becomes well established (Liddy, 2008; McClure and Collins, 2009; Dooley-Fairchild, 2012).

If York is the Northumbrian anomaly town, then the coastal settlements which dominate the eastern Northumbrian seaboard on the North Sea are more the rule (Petts, 2009). This is not to say that inland settlements are absent in Northumbria. Quite the opposite is true; and there are certainly large rivers throughout the kingdom which offer similar circumstances to the settlements we see elsewhere. However, it is the coastal zone (often nearby a river mouth) which gains prominence throughout the conversion period and into later centuries with major monasteries and royal sites building along the “maritime highway,” facilitating easy trade and communication (Loveluck and Tys, 2006; Petts, 2009). One particular area in coastal Northumbria, which typifies this plural settlement pattern, is the royal seat of Bamburgh and the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. Their Old English names were *Bebbanburg* and *Lindisfarena* eg (Stenton, 1971). These placenames are very interesting. *Bebbanburg* highlights the royal connection and power in this area very clearly. It is named after King Æthelfrith of Bernicia’s first wife Queen Bebbe or Bebb, and the name means Bebbe’s Burgh or fort/stronghold (Thorpe, 1980; McClure and Collins, 2009; Keynes, 2014). The later town therefore assumes this name as well as the fortress. The island monastery of Lindisfarne is a trickier case with a very practical name given to the island, which does not relate directly to its distinctly ecclesiastical nature in our period. *Lindisfarena* eg means Lindsey (Lincolnshire) travellers’ island. Who these travellers from Lindsey were and how they became associated with an island so far in the north of Northumbria is unclear, especially when one considers that the foundation of the monastery on Lindisfarne was initiated by Iona, as is well known (Petts, 2009; McClure and Collins, 2009; Blair, 2014). The close association of the Church with the Bamburgh settlement is evident in the burial practices of the Bowl Hole cemetery, where relatively higher internal consistency and organization is evident compared to more rural cemeteries (Groves, 2003; Groves, 2010; Groves et al., 2013; Leggett, forthcoming).

This royal-monastery/minster association is well attested in both centralized and plural settlements north and south of the Humber. However, as shown by Petts (2009), the regular positioning of Northumbrian ecclesiastical buildings along the coast looks more like a determined way-station, toll point, or colonial strategy rather than a missionary style building plan which follows either a) the old Roman towns or b) where well-established communities are. While it is certainly true that some of these monasteries and minsters are near major royal sites (e.g., Bamburgh) or established settlements, this is certainly not always the case. The colonial, frontier nature of these monasteries is reflected in their archaeology, with such places seen as productive sites, taking over or catalyzing much of the economic activity in an area (Blair, 1988; Blair, 2005; Pestell, 2011). Perhaps these archaeological footprints are also a by-product of a more dispersed population in Northumbria than the southern kingdoms, which had a very different terrain, resulting in a more bovine and livestock based economy, and a more nomadic and seasonal pattern of elite (and perhaps commoner) settlement until Christianization (Arnold, 1997). Therefore, we see monasteries as the dominant element in the landscape not because they necessarily were in the earlier Christian

period, but because they had the more permanent architecture and occupation until the mid to late eighth century onwards. This is a distinct probability. Thus, without more middle Anglo-Saxon period site data in Northumbria, it is difficult to be certain about its plurality versus centrality, although it is a compelling argument; and a north-south differential is certainly apparent in other evidence.

Now, to contrast the northern settlements with those south of the Humber. Despite its theoretical homogeneity, Northumbria shows a great amount of variation across its large expanse of land. The southern kingdoms and their settlements likewise show variability. However, due to the high degree of Romanization and the later impacts of the Norman building program, it is often hard to discern the Saxon sequences of settlement beneath later medieval layers (Loyn, 1991; Saunders, 1991). Thus, there is often initially a flavor of sameness across these southern settlements, some of which is due to Alfred the Great's burghal fortifications. Centralization seems to be far more prevalent in these southern towns than the highly plural northern towns. Whether this is due to the Romanization gradient, burghal fortification, a relic of the later Norman settlement or any number of other factors, we cannot be certain. However, the case studies chosen for the southern English kingdoms show a nucleation of settlement in the Mid- to Late Saxon periods, particularly when it comes to royal and ecclesiastical presences and economic foci.

WINCHESTER/WINTANCEASTER

Intertwined Church and royal colonial interests are very well displayed in the West Saxon capital of Winchester. The archaeological evidence of Winchester, or *Wintanceaster* in the Old English, is interesting to compare with the written materials. We know about Winchester's symbolic, political and economic importance predominantly from the written record, and we attribute historical significance to it because of these documents (Meaney and Hawkes, 1970; Stenton, 1971; Hill, 1981; Hinton, 1984; Ridyard, 1988; Crook, 2014). However, when compared with wic sites (London and York in particular) it falls woefully short on plurality of function and sheer size for what was supposedly the most important town in Mid- to Late Saxon Wessex.

Winchester was the capital of Wessex and England from the ninth century onwards. This is of particular interest when considering the following evidence: As a "ceaster" or old Roman town, the site has the appropriate archaeological signatures, including evidence of a "dark earth" period in the early Saxon period where most of the Anglo-Saxon activity occurred outside the old Roman city walls, a pattern not dissimilar to what we find in London (Meaney and Hawkes, 1970; Hinton, 1984; Crook, 2014). The choice to incorporate the "ceaster" suffix to the placename, deliberate or not, is a key piece of evidence as to how the Anglo-Saxons identified and interacted with the past in their landscapes (Gelling, 1984; Gelling, 1988; Higham and Ryan, 2011).



Figure 2 – Winchester (Wintanceaster) as it would have been in the 9th-11th centuries AD, with the Alfredian Burh in cream, the area of the Old Minster (and later for the New Minster) in blue, the New Minster in Orange, Nunnaminster in fuchsia and what is postulated to be part of the original royal area in purple.

The “wintan” prefix for the placename here is also interesting, especially when considering the Roman evidence above. It seems to be an Old English translation of the Roman Venta (Venta Belgarum was the Roman name for the town) which was in turn borrowed from the Celtic name which was likely Caer Wynt (Biddle, 1973; Gelling, 2012; Crook, 2014). This etymology suggests that it was seen as a town or fortress from the Iron Age, if not earlier, making the toponymic associations very strong.

Another important aspect associated with Winchester is the *witan* or *witenagemot*, which was a great council of the king’s advisors, key thegns, or ealdormen, often with a strong ecclesiastical presence as well. Although “witan” and “wintan” may not etymologically be linked in this instance, the lawmaking association with the town was resilient. However, the ecclesiastical element was not essential until the tenth century onwards, meaning that, despite conversion and ongoing Christianization, compulsory ecclesiastical involvement in land grants and other royal business was very late, although it became increasingly common from the eighth century onwards. Regardless, the written records clearly denote a strong royal presence and importance for the town, with surviving charters reflecting this (Stenton, 1971; Cubitt, 1995; Barrow and Wareham, 2008).

This is the only case study in this sample where the royal and ecclesiastical areas so obviously merge and overlap. There is much debate about the integrated nature of ecclesiastical and royal enclosures during the first century or so after conversion in Anglo-Saxon England, with little clarity or consensus about what the relationship between the two was. Certainly, royals had their

own chapels within royal enclosures and churches had to rely on land grants from royalty or the upper classes; but how entwined the spatial organization and use was in this period is for the most part indiscernible (Biddle, 1973; Biddle, 1975; Ridyard, 1988; Biddle, 1989; Blair, 1996; Arnold, 1997; Yorke, 2003; Cowie, 2004; Barrow and Wareham, 2008). Biddle (1973, 1975, 1989) and Blair (1996, 2005) are the opposing voices in this argument, generally speaking, with Biddle advocating for some of these un-classified sites being royal halls, and Blair preferring minsters in the landscape. This overlap could be a product of the Alfredian burghal system limiting space within the safe confines of the city walls, or perhaps it is an artefact of royal-ecclesiastic interactions and land grants in the early medieval period. It is, however, extremely difficult to reconstruct town layouts and development from the written record, especially since many of the landscape features mentioned in the Old English boundary clauses are long lost or indiscernible (Howe, 2008). In terms of ideology, both the archaeology and written records are clear for Winchester; it has major importance as a royal capital and yet the archaeology shows a dominance of religious institutions. The spatial patterning in the archaeology suggests that the minsters within the burghal walls (approximately 26.1% of the whole walled area, compared with approx. 4% royal contribution, from ArcGIS mapping above see Figure 2) dominate the internal space, and thus this might reflect their ideological dominance within the town. It seems that one relatively small royal holding within the city walls does not necessarily reflect the balance of power in the eighth and ninth centuries. It was an extremely powerful royal town, yet the spatial dominance is heavily in favor of the church. This is a theme that might hold true for all of the centralized southern Anglo-Saxon towns, especially those that were subject to Mercian or West Saxon burghal fortification.

LONDON/LUNDENWIC

London is by far the largest town in Anglo-Saxon England, and by extension also in this study. It deserves this title by several standards. If you include both the wic and the old Roman town/later fortified burh in size estimates, it is on a scale unmatched by any other town on the island. While the exact extent of the wic area is still unknown, our ArcGIS estimates place it in the realm of 250 to 300 hectares with the walled area sitting at approximately 600 hectares. Comparatively, York during this period, including the *colonia* and wic areas, has a combined area of approximately 450 hectares. The direct comparison with York is a valid one: both were Roman provincial capitals with a walled area and forts, and with a shifting emphasis to the wic trading area in the early medieval period (Wacher, 1974a; Wacher, 1974b; Hooke, 1988; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Daniell, 2008; Rogers, 2011; Fulford and Holbrook, 2015). London, like York, in the earlier period has very little activity within the old Roman walls, with the majority of the economic and settlement activity occurring across the River Fleet in the wic area. St Paul's, one of the earliest churches in Anglo-Saxon England, was founded within Londinium's walls (Fowler and Taylor, 2013; Cowie et al., 2012; Brooke and Keir, 1975). This pattern of links between Southumbrian churches and Rome has readily been explored (Bell, 2001). However, London's distinctive area divisions make it effectively a dual city, with more spatial separation than York's districts. The old Roman walled city is dominated by the Christian church and the Roman ruins, while the wic area is a lay settlement with the majority of Roman Lunden's economic activity based in this area to the west of the River Fleet.

London has churches intramurally, between the wic and burh, within the wic and as satellites. The sites shown on Figure 3 below are likely only a small representation of the original Mid- to Late Saxon churches (all area calculations for London – and the other case studies, for that matter – are approximate due to a lack of excavation and documentary evidence for boundaries). The data is highly suggestive, however, even in this approximated form. If we take the known

churches within and between the wic and the walled town (thus essentially within the immediately occupied areas) the estimated area occupied by churches was 81.3 hectares, equalling around 9% of the total wic and walled areas combined. The satellite institutions (including Westminster on Thorney Island) have an approximate total area of 62.4 hectares. If we add up all of these church compounds they equal 16% (approx.) of Saxon London's total estimated area (which is in the realm of over 900 hectares).

What is unclear in this case, as with the majority of Anglo-Saxon sites (with Bamburgh being the main exception here) is where the royals placed their residences in this city of two halves. London is peculiarly liminal. Having fallen on tribal borders since the pre-Roman period, it moved in and out of different *Bretwaldas* and other kingdoms' control throughout the centuries, with reports of several different kingdoms having palaces there at any one time. This strongly suggests that this was to conduct business in the port (Brooke and Keir, 1975; Cowie et al., 2012; Rogers, 2011; Wachter, 1974b; Sorrell, 1969). The excavations at Whitehall suggest that a Middle Saxon royal hall lies within the wic area, which is fitting, showing that elite power has existed close to Downing Street for over a thousand years. Likewise, popular reports exist stating that a Mercian royal residence was close to the site of St Alban's Wood Street (Cowie, 2004). It is likely that there were several different halls on both sides of the Fleet, but this is difficult to confirm or deny without more excavation.

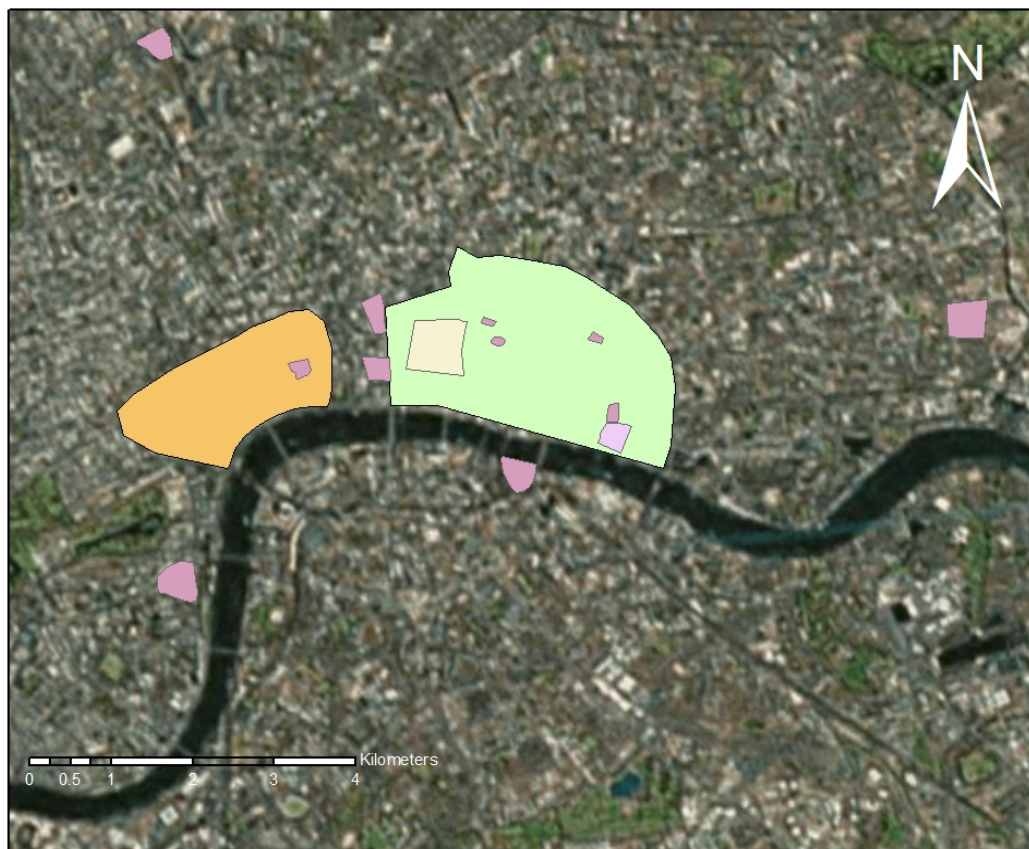


Figure 3 - Middle Saxon London spatial estimates. Green – Intramural area, orange – potential limits of the wic area, cream – St Paul's, Purple – other churches with middle to Late Saxon origins (potential or proven): St Pancras Old Church, Westminster, St Bride's, St Clement Dane's, St Andrew's Holborn, St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate, St Alban's Wood Street, St Lawrence Jewry, St Olave Hart Street, All Hallows Barking (By-the-Tower), Southwark Cathedral and St Dunstan and All Saints Stepney.

This is therefore not a simple case of burghal centralization and enclosure, or even centralization for purely economic reasons. London in the Mid- to Late Saxon period is the clearest case in the southern kingdoms of settlement plurality we will see in these case studies. The wic in Saxon London is a lay trading center focused on economy, an unbounded place for the people, whereas the intramural area is a place for the Roman-Christian church, and potentially royals (although, as discussed throughout, there is not much if any archaeological evidence for royal occupation at any of the case study sites) (Brooke and Keir, 1975; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Cowie, 2004; Cowie et al., 2012; Fowler and Taylor, 2013).

OXFORD/OXNAFORD

Oxford is a case study of interest since its fortification and enclosure within the city walls during the Alfredian period, and then the limits of the settlement on the south side with the river and marshland, have meant that space was at a premium within the town (Dodd, 2003). As seen in Figure 5, the majority of elite space is dominated by the Church, strategically placing churches, minsters and religious houses along key roads, gates and thoroughfares. There was a surge of ecclesiastical building between the seventh and eleventh centuries with at least seven monasteries and minsters within the Alfredian walls, and with only one likely royal site, potentially under the current motte and bailey castle (or elsewhere) (Blair, 1990; Dodd, 2003). However, for the purposes of this study, the royal area has been mapped below as the Norman castle area in the dark purple. This approach is problematic, as mentioned above, with the obvious issues of retrodiction aside. It assumes continuity between the Anglo-Saxon and Norman elite areas, often with little or no archaeological evidence. However, in these cases presented here, we have the conundrum that these towns are all known from documentary sources (e.g., charters and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) to be sites of royal interest (Gelling, 1979; Hill, 1981; Robertson, 1986; Cubitt, 1995; Barrow and Wareham, 2008). The attempt to locate them among the far more archaeological and temporally robust ecclesiastical buildings is difficult, if not futile. However, as the saying goes “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” (Sagan, 1997). Therefore, an attempt has been made throughout this paper to re-introduce the Anglo-Saxon royalty and elite into the urban landscape, to counterbalance the high visibility of churches.

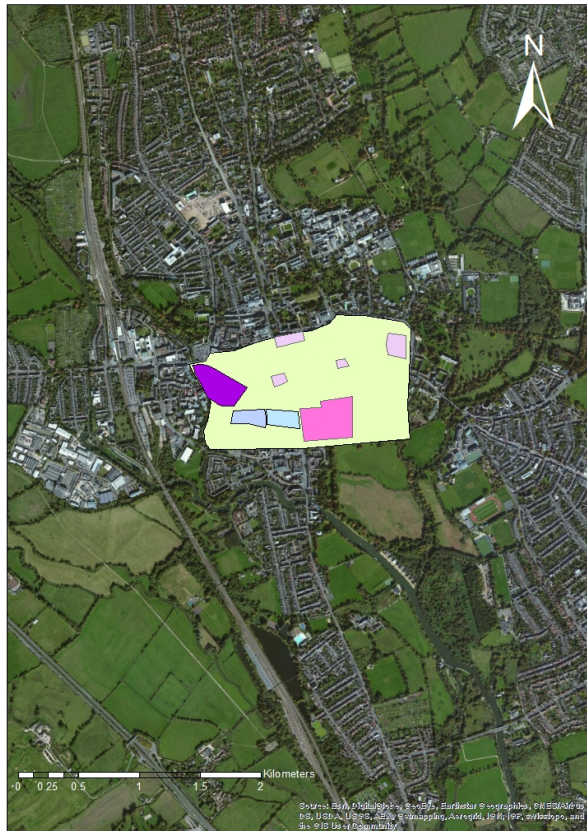


Figure 4 – Oxford (Oxnaford) in the 9th-11th centuries AD before the University. The light green area is the extent of the Alfredian burh, purple marks the area of the castle (standing in proxy for the Anglo-Saxon royal area), pink is St Frideswide's Minster (now underneath Christchurch College), the fuchsia areas are lesser churches within the town walls, the light blue is St Aldate's minster with the lavender area denoting St Ebbe's minster.

While the placename evidence for Oxford is well documented, it speaks more to the natural environment and pastoralism or agriculture than to any town development or church influence. Yet, we can clearly see in the Mid- to Late Saxon periods that the dominant force, at least spatially in the town, is the church, which has a very clear impact on the later development of Oxford as the university town it is today. With such a strong monastic presence, it is surprising that it grew as a center for learning and education from the Norman period onwards (Haslam, 1984; Gelling, 1988; Hooke, 1988; Blair, 1990; Dodd, 2003). Looking at the map of Mid- to Late Saxon Oxford above (Figure 5) on a modern base map, its marshy and riverine nature in the early Middle Ages is not immediately apparent. It was limited by the Thames and thus limited in opportunities for expansion. As such, it was easy to dominate, which the church subsequently did. By the end of the eleventh century, Oxford's churches accounted for at least 16% of the intramural area, with the proxy royal area only accounting for approximately 5% of the internal space.

So, despite its very utilitarian placename, Oxford is a prime example of ecclesiastical colonial domination of a settlement which, due to Alfredian fortification, stayed predominantly under church control for centuries; arguably until the secularization of the university (Dodd, 2003). Like London and Winchester, a minimum of three times the amount of land within Oxford's walled area belonged to the church, compared with the royal presence. However, this focus on central places and towns as seats of power ignores the hinterland and, at least in the Northumbrian case, the Anglo-Saxon economic emphasis on agriculture and livestock as a sign of wealth and power. It is highly likely that although much intramural land in Oxford, Winchester, and London was given to

the church, the royalty and nobility still retained much of the valuable arable land and portable wealth (at least until later in the Middle Ages).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

While it would seem expedient to relegate many of the trends to a clear north/south divide or even to a gradient of Romanization, this approach will inevitably fall short (Bell, 2001; Fulford and Holbrook, 2015). Northumbria is certainly a region which should be treated differently from the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. However, it is easy to ignore the variety in this large and diverse area of England, and vice versa, with the southern kingdoms which are too often treated as almost synonymous with one another. The placename evidence is glaringly obvious for the majority of ex-Roman towns, and so too is the mark they left on the town planning of these places. This is not the whole story, however (Gelling, 1984; Gelling, 1988; Petts, 2009; Higham and Ryan, 2011). One of the main foci of this paper has been to investigate royal versus ecclesiastical presence and dominance in Anglo-Saxon settlements. The toponomastic evidence, while reliable, is not always chosen to reflect these cultural aspects, which might have (and often did) develop long after a placename was given to a site. We must therefore also use charter and archaeological evidence to examine land ownership and usage by the church and elites in this period. As stated above, charter evidence is biased towards the Church, and it is only through detective work that we can perhaps catch a glimpse of who owned the land before it was given to a particular religious institution; but this only gives us a partial picture. The archaeology is similarly incomplete for various reasons: many of the major sites lay under modern cities; early churches and royal halls were wooden and so often look very similar in plan and survival rates are low; early churches were more often built in stone increasing their survival over royal halls; the Norman Conquest potentially destroyed the elite enclosures; among many other possibilities. That said, we can still garner a great deal of information despite these difficulties.

Most major ecclesiastical sites in Northumbria are coastal, with very few known sites inland, whereas, in the southern kingdoms, we find stand-alone monastic centres (Fairless, 1994; Petts, 2009). However, most of the major minsters and monasteries were incorporated into the large towns and cities, or were catalyzed by said towns and cities, and thus played a critical role in town development and the colonization of the landscape. Churches occupied key places and areas within the Anglo-Saxon landscape, and therefore did so also in the Anglo-Saxon consciousness. The same can be said for elite structures. The populations of both groups became unbalanced, however, in favor of the clergy (which it must be remembered were ruled by members of the royal and noble families as well). Churches had the ability to multiply within the landscape and expand readily; and church colonization of regions or towns was often far more visible than the royal centres, particularly due to their significant impact upon town development during the Middle Ages (Blair, 1988; Higham, 1997; Blair, 2005; Karkov and Howe, 2006; Tyler, 2007; Foster, 2008; Dunn, 2010). Therefore, the apparent domination of urban and rural landscapes by the church might best be understood as part of the overall elite control of the landscape and towns. Thus, what appears initially oppositional with the church-royal building distinction (or the quest for colonization by development) may actually be a far more unified and integrated dynastic process.

The ideological struggle in the landscape which began as a symbiotic process between the church and royalty/nobility eventually, in the course of the later centuries of the Middle Ages and into the Tudor period, became a case of awkward cohabitation and, under Henry VIII, outright animosity (Leggett, forthcoming). The tables became utterly turned; what once was a landscape of pagan worship (either Celtic or Germanic) populated by a relatively nomadic elite who made

strategic choices with landmarks, and whose power was linked directly to the sacred, slowly became centralized and focused on specific buildings of worship (churches), and sacred power was transferred to a new social subset and Rome (Wallace-Hadrill, 1971; Higham, 1997; Tyler, 2007; Leggett, forthcoming).

Post-Roman town development in England owes much to the dynastic prerogatives of the Anglo-Saxon elite following the introduction of Christianity. A pattern which has emerged in this data is that, despite the large variety in settlement types, placename evidence – when coupled with archaeological data – shows a strong correlation between Roman and non-Roman pasts and settlement plurality. What is even stronger, however, is the pattern of links between the Roman past and Church colonization of the landscape. The pattern in Northumbria makes this point clearly. In an area almost devoid of a visible Roman past, and indeed without much infrastructure generally, we see scattered and separate royal and ecclesiastical settlements, at least in the earlier periods. As a rule, Northumbrian settlements tended to have ecclesiastical establishments outside of the major towns. There, churches were incorporated within town limits only as an exception, the opposite of what is found in the southern kingdoms. Of course, isolated monastic establishments can be found across Anglo-Saxon England during this period. However, most major towns, especially those with a major royal presence from York southwards, tended to have at least one monastery, minster, church, or cathedral within the city walls. These establishments were often within the old Roman walls, and near the royal enclosure. Aside from York, however, few if any major settlements in the Northumbrian kingdoms adhere to this rule (Drake, 1788; Wachter, 1974a; Hall, 1988; Fairless, 1994; Hill and Cowie, 2001; Campbell, 2004; Petts, 2009).

Furthermore, when the two centers of power (secular/royal and ecclesiastical) were found within close proximity, we find that burial practices and cemetery organization tended to be more regulated, at least internally within the cemetery and immediate local area. This is likely due to greater integration and synchronization between the temporal and spiritual leaders of the community. These close affiliations would have allowed for better syncretism of practices such as burial, or other cultural practices, which might otherwise be affected by a change in religion (Meaney and Hawkes, 1970; Geake, 1995; Groves, 2003; Buckberry, 2004; Groves, 2010; Leggett, forthcoming).

Placenames give us clues as to the nature and structure of Anglo-Saxon settlements, and written sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and charters can highlight through personal and family names the dynastic forces linked to changes we see in the archaeological record (Gelling, 1979; Robertson, 1986; Cubitt, 1995; Barrow and Wareham, 2008; Snook, 2015). Oxford and Winchester, while certainly having some activity outside the city walls, were essentially enclosed urban spaces in which royal and ecclesiastical areas were the dominant presences within the walled areas. London and York were more pluralistic due to their significant reliance on the wic trading areas, but yet still having the post-Roman, re-fortified enclosed areas. In essence, these wic settlements were larger, more economically focussed expansions of the enclosed burhs and old Roman towns, combining a large number of settlement functions in a larger sprawling area. The more scattered settlements and monumental buildings (castles, elite enclosures and minsters/monasteries) of Northumbria, on the other hand, show a more decentralized, pluralistic pattern than the enclosed settlements from York southwards.

While we must be cautious about equating most of these patterns with previous areas of Romanization. The association cannot be ignored, the Old English placenames and even in most cases the modern names for these places are clear identification of the Roman past. Economics likely play a large factor in these different developments. Towns or settlements associated with either a wic or something else of high economic importance (e.g., a mint or market) tended to have a significantly high church presence within and around the city limits. It is not unusual for these sites

to attract more than one church, oftentimes one inside and one outside the city walls. However, in some circumstances, several churches were built within and around certain towns. London and Oxford are good examples. In both cases, the presence of ecclesiastical structures within an urbanizing zone becomes far more prominent than the one royal residence (or in the case of London, a few). The concentration is often higher with proximity to previous Roman structures and towns, with the contrast between Northumbrian and southern towns becoming particularly distinct. When these aspects are considered alongside the fact that many of these southern settlements were heavily re-fortified by either Offa or Alfred against the Vikings after the capture of most of Northumbria and Mercia, we can see that major political and practical considerations may have caused these patterns we see today (Brooke and Keir, 1975; Hill, 1981; Daniell, 2008). Likewise, the Norman Conquest, with its feudal landscape, medieval enclosure and centuries of farming have changed the visibility of the early medieval landscape archaeologically, making previous Saxon structures often unidentifiable (Stenton, 1961; Loyn, 1991).

Perhaps the true power of the kings in these earlier periods was not dominance in intramural or urban space but in the control of the hinterland and economic activity. The placement of churches suggests a desire to be close to these economic activities, yet it is still royal writ and charter that dictates taxes and other economic dealings, including land grants, even for the church. The skewing of the picture of land ownership in Anglo-Saxon England is entirely due to a reliance on an incomplete corpus of charters, which are predominantly ecclesiastical in nature to begin with. While most historians and archaeologists acknowledge this, it is difficult to disengage from the image we have of an early English Church being granted large swathes of land by royal gift, thus somewhat depleting the royal and noble classes of land-based power. How this maps against the decentralized and dispersed spatial patterns of Northumbria is still being investigated. What appears to be common on both sides of the Humber, is a higher number of ecclesiastical institutions compared with known royal sites. This is commonly accepted to be a side effect of building practices and the nature of monastic foundations. Royalty and social elites are exclusive and small in number by definition, whereas the clergy are less particular, requiring more monasteries and minsters to house new nuns and monks. This led to a colonial-type expansion of church buildings across Britain (and the world).

With further archaeological investigation into a broader landscape surrounding these key towns and emerging urban centres, it is likely that a more balanced picture of land control will emerge. However, due to various farming practices and the elusive nature of Anglo-Saxon material generally, let alone anything that will definitively show royal ownership or control, it will be hard to prove this case either way. Therefore, despite the increasing dominance of ecclesiastical institutions in major towns along key trade routes (i.e., rivers and coastal zones) and near economic hubs, their colonial aspirations may not have been as successful as often advocated. Certainly their architecture, especially when these churches and monasteries were built in stone, would have been impressive to the population. So, perhaps the Church's quest to capture the popular mind was effective, with frequency and higher visibility of ecclesiastical buildings making their presence more felt than that of the less numerous royal abodes (Brooke and Keir, 1975; Arnold, 1997; Blair, 2005). We may never be able to fully reconstruct the subtleties of power between churches and the state in Anglo-Saxon England; however the image that is emerging from this work is dynamic and more nuanced than many authors allow.

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